

Week Ending Friday, July 26, 1996

Statement on Signing the National Children's Island Act of 1995

July 19, 1996

Today I have signed into law H.R. 1508, the National Children's Island Act. This bill authorizes the transfer of Federal land to the District of Columbia for the development of a cultural, educational, family-oriented recreation park and a children's playground on two man-made islands in the District of Columbia's Anacostia River. The two islands in question, Kingman and Heritage, were created in 1916 by the Army Corps of Engineers from dredge material in the Anacostia. This project has the potential of bringing much needed development to the area, providing recreational space for children and families, and reclaiming vacant land that, at the present, is in very poor condition.

At the same time, I am strongly committed to making sure that any development on these islands proceeds in an environmentally sound and sensitive manner. Under this legislation, all development plans for Children's Island—whether for the recreation park, playground, related structures, bridges or roads—must be reviewed and approved by both the District of Columbia and the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC). I will be looking to the NCPC as the Federal watchdog to make sure that all development plans are consistent with the preservation of the natural and cultural resources on the site and in the vicinity. To this end, I have today issued a memorandum to the Chair of the NCPC setting forth the principles that should guide the NCPC in its review of plans for the development of Children's Island.

In particular, I have asked the NCPC to take a careful look at the project to make sure that both environmental safeguards—including those contained in the original plan approved by the NCPC and the National Park Service—and recreational needs are

met. In this regard, the NCPC must ensure that the level of development chosen be appropriate to the area with due regard to the surrounding neighborhoods, the ecosystem management initiatives for the Anacostia River, and preservation of the integrity of the nearby parkland. Moreover, the NCPC must ensure that development plans are consistent with the principles of environmental justice contained in Executive Order No. 12898 of February 11, 1994. Further, the National Park Service, as an adjacent landowner, should fully participate in the NCPC process.

In addition, I stated to the NCPC that, in conducting its review, the NCPC should be certain that the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act be met. The NCPC should carefully consider all alternatives, including the no action alternative of not moving forward if adverse impacts are identified that are severe and unavoidable.

I also asked the NCPC to afford the public maximum opportunity for comment. This will allow the proposed planning process to reflect the full range of views about development of the islands.

Further, I am directing the Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of Defense, and Administrator of General Services—all of whom are represented on the NCPC—to ensure that the NCPC's review of this project emphasize children's recreation and education, the protection and restoration of the Anacostia watershed, and the public interest of the adjacent neighborhoods.

Should the development plans for Children's Island ultimately not pass muster with the NCPC or the District of Columbia, so that the park is not built, the Act provides that the islands will revert back to the National Park Service.

It is my expectation that this legislation will promote the development of these islands in a manner that will serve the economic and recreational needs of the District of Colum-

bia while at the same time preserving our important natural and cultural resources.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
July 19, 1996.

NOTE: H.R. 1508, approved July 19, was assigned Public Law No. 104-163. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Memorandum on National Children's Island

July 19, 1996

Memorandum for the Chair of the National Capital Planning Commission

Subject: National Children's Island

Today I signed into law H.R. 1508, the National Children's Island Act, which authorizes the development of a family-oriented recreation park and a children's playground on islands in the Anacostia River in the District of Columbia. The creation of this project has had the strong support of the District of Columbia government. In addition, the National Park Service has worked for many years to improve this area. The project will bring much needed development into the area.

While it is my intent that this opportunity be made available to the children of the District of Columbia, I am also strongly committed to making sure that any development of these islands is consistent with the preservation of the natural and cultural resources on the site and in the vicinity. I will be looking to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) as the Federal watchdog to achieve these dual goals.

The Act specifies that any development plan be reviewed and approved by the NCPC. I expect the NCPC to be guided by the following principles:

- The project should fully conform to the design, height, density, and other environmental and developmental safeguards contained in the plat filed in the

Office of the Surveyor of the District of Columbia under S.O. 92-252.

- The NCPC should fully comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act in reviewing the proposed project and associated structures, including transportation components. In doing so, the NCPC should ensure that all members of the affected community and other interested parties have ample opportunity to participate in the development of alternatives and to review and comment on the analysis of impacts. The NCPC should carefully consider all alternatives, including the no action alternative, in its review. Its ultimate goal should be to ensure appropriate development on the site consistent with protection of the historical and natural resources found in the area, protection of the neighborhood, and preservation of the integrity of nearby parkland.
- The NCPC should ensure that the design is consistent with the principles of environmental justice contained in Executive Order No. 12898 of February 11, 1994.

I have also directed the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Defense, and the Administrator of General Services to assure that the NCPC fully complies with the recommendations detailed above. They shall seek to assure that all reviews done emphasize children's recreation and education, the protection and restoration of the Anacostia watershed, and the public interest of the adjacent neighborhoods.

These endeavors should result in a plan that will serve the economic and recreational needs of the District of Columbia in a fashion compatible with the preservation of important natural and cultural resources.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.